

Kilkenny People May 20th 1916

The Voice of the People

Kilkenny appears to us to have been selected for an extra special dose of martial law. The “mailed fist and the cold steel seem to have been more strongly in evidence here than in any other part of Ireland outside the actual scenes of disturbance. What have we done to deserve all this? Is it that we have been too quiet?—shall we say too meek and subservient? Perhaps the “powers that be” considered that “like a dog and a greenwood tree, the more they beat us the better we’ll be.”

We have carefully read the newspapers—in fact, since Easter Monday we have done little else than read newspapers—when we could get them—and we are convinced that Kilkenny was specially victimized. Let us take two Southern cities and a Southern town—Cork, Limerick and Tralee—each supposed to be a hotbed of Sinn Feinism and each having displayed premonitory symptoms of unrest as evidenced by several prosecutions under the Defence of the Realm Act. (We have not had, we believe, a single prosecution under this Act, in Kilkenny City and County since the war began, and the Judges of Assize in their references to us have been as plausible and as courteous as if they were so many. Lord Chesterfields). There have been, no doubt, some arrests in the three places mentioned, but proportionately they were not nearly as numerous as in Kilkenny, and—let this be noted—the arrests were not made until the time fixed by General Maxwell’s Proclamation for the surrender of arms had expired.

When is a document issued under the authority of a British military dictator or a German Imperial Chancellor considered to be binding, and when is it merely a “scrap of paper” to be trampled underfoot? What was the interpretation that the plain, blunt man could put on this Proclamation of General Maxwell? Was it not that the Sinn Fein Volunteers had up to Saturday night, May 6, to surrender their arms, after which date they would be “severely dealt with”? Yet the first arrest was made in Kilkenny on May 3., and the “rounding up” process as it is called, was continued on May 4, 5 and 6, so that practically all the Kilkenny prisoners were arrested before the time limit allowed by Sir John Maxwell expired, one young man being dragged from his house at midnight on Saturday night, May 6.

As we have said in Cork, the scene of Several Realm Act prosecutions and only twenty miles away from the place where an affray took place between police and Volunteers, in connection with which one of the Volunteers has since been executed, in Tralee also the scene of Realm Act prosecutions, five miles away from where Casement landed and still nearer to the port for which the alleged arms-laden German vessel was making, and in Limerick, also the scene of Realm Act prosecutions, the arrests have been comparatively few, and in Cork and Limerick most of the men arrested have since been released. In Kilkenny there has never been the slightest suggestion of trouble—in the habitable globe there has not been a more peaceable city, all classes and creeds dwelt here on the kindest possible terms; yet over thirty young citizens, and one respected citizen, Alderman Nowlan, who is no longer young, have been dragged from their homes, many of them humble wage-earners, away from their wives and families. One of them, a useful and respected citizen, unable to continue his

forced march, dropped dead in the street as he was literally being dragged to the railway station from the gaol.

The sort of militarism we have seen here had not as much brains behind it as you would expect to find in an Orange Jelly turnip, in the fruitless and ridiculous search for arms... Houses and business premises inhabited only by defenceless women whose husbands had been previously arrested were visited on three different occasions, Soldiers armed with rifles and bayonets, some with pickaxes, others with shovels, not forgetting a pair of stretcher-bearers for the wounded, ransacked the places, tore up flooring and seats, and, finding nothing, departed without any attempt to repair the damage done.....

We wish to express our most hearty agreement with the sentiment uttered by the veteran priest and patriot, Canon Nicholas Murphy, in the letter we publish from him to-day. After paying a tribute to the "foolish young fellows who "made a clean and gallant fight, there were no stags or skulkers amongst them" he continues—"And we do not relish the denunciatory resolutions published in the Freeman every day. We should leave these things to the bitter enemies of Ireland, 'clerical and lay." We agree with this. We are quite fed up with moral platitudes. We observe that our friend, Mr M. Keating, M.P., in a letter to the New Ross Guardian, referred to the outbreak as one of the most horrible and foolish episodes in Irish history, and said that the idea of an alliance between Ireland and Germany would be as impossible as an alliance between an angel and a demon in the cause of virtue."

We know nothing about demons, and, like Disraeli, ,we prefer to be "on the side of the angels," but if our public, men can find nothing to say in favour of brave if misguided men who fought and fell, let them be sparing of their censure—" leave these things to the bitter enemies of Ireland," and extend to them the charity that Emmet prayed for, "the charity of their silence "—or, if they will speak or write, let them go straight to the heart of things. Who made the rebellion in Ireland, possible? Carson and his fellow conspirators, and the wretched and wicked Government that allowed these conspirators to arm a bigoted, mob. Is there to be no censure for them? Before any rebel was courtmartialled these men should have been courtmartialled, and politicians should note that time-serving has its limits. Who first spoke of a German alliance but Carson's supporters, who openly boasted that they would rather be ruled by the Kaiser than by a Home Rule Parliament ? We want the saddle put on the right horse. As the Bishop of Killaloe very properly stated "Sir Edward Carson has been the root cause of all this trouble"; and again—"No British officer refused to shoot the men who were goaded to the madness of insurrection by his (Carson's) insulting taunts."

Finally, we wish to commend to the support of their fellow city and county men the appeal that has been issued with the view of providing for the wants of the wives and families of the imprisoned Kilkennymen. If Ulster Volunteers were arrested and detained without charge, Dukes and Earls, Cabinet Ministers, Judges, Primate and Bishops would rush to their support. We, Irishmen and Nationalists, must not "turn down" our brothers. Let us show them that they are not forgot or forsaken, and that their wives and little ones do not lack food or raiment. They are our brothers, one and all, and they are dearer to us than the foul brood of Carrion Crows who are for ever feeding on and gnawing at the vitals of Ireland. And now, Nationalists of the City and County, "'tis your money we want." Sympathise in pounds, shillings and pence.